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least, the modern world. And Verhaeren, with his *Villes Tentaculaires*, put down some of the horror of it. But it is either an *Inferno* only, or a *Purgatorio* or a *Paradiso* only, that the poets of the six centuries since Dante have accomplished. No one has attained Dante's completeness.

Emanuel Carnevali

JOHN ADAMS' PROPHECY

Not long ago *The Freeman* reminded us of a penetrating remark of old John Adams, first grand chief of the Adams clan and second president of the United States. Nay, not old; for he was only forty-five, and still seventeen years from the seat of Washington, when he wrote to his wife in 1780:

> I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation and commerce and agriculture; in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain.

In 1780 America was quite innocent of art; or rather, such art as it had—colonial architecture, a few imported paintings, plays, poems—it took quite innocently, with abstemious discretion. And Adams, if not himself a thorough Puritan, was only four generations from that Henry Adams who, according to his tombstone in Quincy, "took his flight from the Dragon Persecution in Devonshire, England, and landed with eight sons near Wollesston." And the Puritan hostility to art and all its works—

was it not attested by the closing of theaters, the destruction of old churches, the sale of Charles I's collection to Spain, and other temporarily convincing devices to crush out the universal human instinct for creating beauty?

Therefore it is surprising to find this eighteenth-century wise man bequeathing the arts as a glorious heritage to his grandsons yet unborn, and feeling his own hard labors in the founding of a nation to be a mere preliminary to that end. Probably he never asked the much reiterated modern question, "What is art?"—never debated whether it was an iridescent rust of the mind, the beginning of disintegration; or a white-heat of creative energy, the fulmination of spiritual planets and moons, new dwellings for the soul of man.

The nation John Adams helped to found has passed on to the third or fourth generation beyond him without yet getting its machinery into such perfect running order as to free its citizens for the active and creative life of the spirit. There is plenty of machinery, but it proves cumbersome, it clogs. For few descendants of those nation-makers are capable of freedom; they are bound—hand, foot and spirit—to the machine; and their unconscious effort is to bind in the same fashion those who could and would be free, and thereby to conceal the evidence of their own slavery.

Probably each age has its due proportion of artists, actual or potential—that is, its due proportion of creatively imaginative minds. Even John Adams' time, though

barren in artistic product, was probably no more barren than any other in artistic impulse. Certain square-minded historians and critics are always talking of "great artistic periods" as if the artists who illuminate them were necessarily born in clusters; as if, between these clusters, nature must hold her breath in barrenness. There *are* great artistic periods, of course; but they arrive when the creative impulse in the few meets a sympathetic impulse in the many, when all things conspire to bring the artists together into emulative clusters, and make them freely expressive and productive. The great artistic periods come when the creatively imaginative mind finds all conditions urging him, compelling him indeed, to produce temples, songs, tales, murals, carvings of men and gods, rather than "politics and war", or even "mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history" and the rest.

The artist can not be born to order, nor ordered after he is born. Yet it is paradoxically true that only by the will of the people, his contemporaries and neighbors, can he come into his own.

When will the sons of John Adams will it?

H. M.